

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 23, 2003

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## SENATE REPUBLICANS TARGET IDENTITY THEFT

*Bill package would ease victims' frustration, aid prosecutions*

**LANSING** — Senate Republicans on Thursday announced they will make protecting Michigan consumers from the rapidly growing crime of identity theft a top priority during the fall legislative session, Majority Leader Ken Sikkema said today.

“Michigan consumers need to be confident in knowing criminals aren’t out there charging up thousands of dollars on their credit cards,” Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said. “That’s why the Senate Republican Caucus has made this a top issue. Much of what we’re beginning work on will serve as a model for other states.”

Caucus members have introduced a package of bills aimed at making it easier for identity-theft victims to restore their good credit histories as well as giving prosecutors and police the tools to nab ID thieves.

Earlier this week before the Senate Judiciary Committee, lawmakers heard firsthand how identity theft has ruined victims’ credit ratings and created havoc in their lives.

“After hearing two of my constituents this week explain the expensive, time-consuming work they’ve endured just to convince people they’ve been victims of identity theft, I don’t want other Michigan consumers and small businesses going through the same ordeal,” said Sen. Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, a prime backer of the package.

Victims told senators how they had their personal information taken and used to open fraudulent loan, credit card and cell phone accounts. In Chip St. Clair’s case, he was left to pay back thousands of dollars in loans and still has problems with his credit cards despite how he proved conclusively years ago that he wasn’t responsible for the charges.

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Both men had problems getting the major credit reporting agencies to fix their credit records.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, said committee members also heard from law enforcement officials and prosecutors on what can be done to combat this growing crime.

“My committee will work diligently to protect Michigan consumers and small businesses when it begins to review this package,” Cropsey said. “As federal statistics show, identity theft has exploded in past years, becoming one of the fastest growing crimes nationally.”

A Judiciary Committee hearing is planned for the package at 1 p.m., Tuesday, in Room 210 of the Farnum Building, 125 W. Allegan St., Lansing.

Making up the package are:

- **Senate Bill 792**, sponsored by Bishop: Named the Identity Theft Protection Act, this would prohibit denying or reducing credit to ID theft victims as well as soliciting or extending credit to consumers by mailing unsolicited checks and similar items. It also would create an identity theft advisory board to make future recommendations about how state leaders can deal with this fast-changing issue.
- **SB 793**, sponsored by Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores: The bill gives police and prosecutors the power to open criminal investigations and bring cases in the jurisdiction where the victim resides or where the crime was committed.
- **SB 794**, sponsored by Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia: The bill creates a standardized certificate ID theft victims can use to prove their identity has been used for fraudulent purposes so they can restore their credit histories more quickly.
- **SB 795**, sponsored by Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi: The bill would prohibit individuals, companies, governmental organizations, including schools and universities, or other legal entities from disclosing to a third-party or publicly displaying the Social Security number of a person unless that person consents or the disclosure is authorized by law.

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- **SB 796**, sponsored by Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland: The bill would require the Michigan State Police to start compiling information on victims of identity theft and identity-theft thieves.
- **SB 797**, sponsored by Sen. Tom George, R-Texas Township: The bill would create sentencing guidelines for the Identity Theft Protection Act.
- **SB 798**, sponsored Sen. Alan Sanborn, R-Richmond Township: This bill would prohibit any denial or reduction of credit because someone is a victim of identity theft.
- **SB 219**, sponsored by Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell: The bill would prohibit retailers from requiring Social Security numbers from customers for anything other than credit checks.
- **SB 220**, sponsored by Garcia: This bill would prohibit retailers from publishing the full credit card number of customers on receipts.
- **SB 657**, sponsored by Sen. Cameron Brown, R-Sturgis: The bill would limit the ability of sellers of goods and services to require Social Security numbers from consumers, unless the consumer is seeking an extension of credit, or disclosure of the information is required or authorized by state or federal laws.
- An additional bill, to be introduced by Cropsey, would increase the statute of limitations for identity-theft crimes.
- **Senate Resolution 182**, sponsored by Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood: This resolution would ask the U.S. Congress to provide greater protections against identity theft by.
- **SR 183**, sponsored Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton: The resolution would ask the U.S. Congress to increase the statute of limitations for identity-theft lawsuits to two years from the time the fraud is discovered.

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